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Turn on the Light

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A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, September 24, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 87 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. And the week's rolled around to Tuesday again, ---which brings us Ruth Van Deman with more news from over Bureau of Home Economics way.

And, by the way, Ruth, you and Jim Hasselman certainly rang the bell with your news about school lunches last week.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

That's easy --- when the school bell and the dinner bell are one and the same.

KADDERLY:

I'm very much impressed with the letters coming from every State in the Union, just about. Most of these letters and cards are from women, but some seem to be from men. And nearly every one says: "We're starting a school lunch project in our town -- I'm on the hot lunch committee at our school."

VAN DEMAN:

Did you see the one from the D.D.S. --- the doctor of dental surgery

KADDERLY:

No, I didn't but that's very interesting. Being a dentist he ought to know what happens to children's teeth when they don't get enough calcium ---

VAN DEMAN:

And vitamin D and various other things. Yes, a dentist would make a very valuable member of the hot lunch committee for a school.

KADDERLY:

Is your supply of the menus and recipes for the lunchroom managers holding out all right --- think you'll have enough to meet the demand?

VAN DEMAN:

I think so. And if we don't we'll order a reprint. We'll do our best to send every school that needs it, and wants it, a set of these quantity receipts for the hot lunch at noon.

And now on to something else important to the health, happiness, and general welfare of every school child. You've seen this new bulletin "Electric Light for the Farmstead."

KADDERLY:

Yes, but this doesn't include lighting for the schoolhouse, does it?

VAN DEMAN:

No, not for the schoolhouse. --- But you haven't forgotten the part of school work you did at home, have you, --- homework at the dining room table, -- after supper --- by the light of the hanging lamp?

KADDERLY:

A smoky coal oil lamp? Now, Ruth, you're not going to class me a venerable pioneer, are you?

VAN DEMAN:

Not quite in the class with Abraham Lincoln and the pine knots from the fireplace.

KADDERLY:

When you stop to think of it, human eyes have stood a lot of punishment in the search for knowledge, haven't they?

VAN DEMAN:

Mine have, I know. But that's partly because I didn't know how to take care of them. And very likely we still have a tremendous amount to learn about light in relation to the eye. It wasn't so many years ago I first heard of foot candles and saw the first light meter.

KADDERLY:

You're still a jump ahead of me on the light meter.

VAN DEMAN:

I'll fix that in just a second. I have one right here in my bag ---

KADDERLY:

A light meter in your bag --- well, that is a new gadget for a woman to carry in her bag.

VAN DEMAN:

This isn't exactly a habit with me, Wallace. Light meters are not, definitely not, standard equipment for ladies handbags, or standard equipment for households either. A light meter costs around 10 or 15 dollars. I borrowed this one from the agricultural engineers just for the day.

KADDERLY:

I see. This is a meter to measure light in terms of foot candles.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, it gives a measure of the amount of light you need when you read or do other kinds of close work.

KADDERLY:

Read my scrip for the market reports, for instance.

VAN DEMAN:

That's it. And just a bright spot of light on your scrip wouldn't be good for your eyes either.



KADDERLY:

No, I understand the modern theory of lighting is to light the whole room --- general illumination.

VAN DEMAN:

So there'll be no sharp contrasts of light and shadow ---

KADDERLY:

That's right, a spot light on the work and the rest of the room dark, makes the eyes do a quick adjustment at every time you look up.

VAN DEMAN:

Almost like changing the opening on your camera. When the light is poor, you increase the size of the opening, to let in more light. Otherwise, you don't get a clear picture. If the light is brilliant, you stop down the size of the opening.

KADDERLY:

Yes --- the eye is a good bit like a camera --- taking a whole series of continuous pictures --- all day long and sometimes far into the night. It automatically makes its own adjustments to get the right amount of light. And if it has to make very sharp adjustments for very long at a time, as it has to do when you're reading under a spotlight in a dark room --- well, I can see how that would cause an extra strain.

VAN DEMAN:

But we're kinder to our cameras than we are to our eyes. At least we're more careful to see that the light is right so the camera lens can do a good job of taking a picture.

But to get back to the homework on the dining room table. Did you notice this picture in the new lighting bulletin?

KADDERLY:

Father, mother, and the three children, gathered under the evening lamp. Father, I see, is a little bald --- looks natural. And I see he's reading the evening paper.

VAN DEMAN:

And sitting sidewise to the table, so the light falls over his left shoulder.

KADDERLY:

The whole table and the whole room seem to be well lighted.

VAN DEMAN:

This is an example of a good type of ceiling fixture, with a 10-inch diffusion bowl to cut down glare. The fixture is placed high enough to spread the light over the whole table. Also it's low enough so the diffusing bowl is covered by the shade, and is not seen by the people sitting around the table.

KADDERLY:

This lamp must be using a 100-watt bulb, at least a 100-watter.

VAN DEMAN:

A 150 watts. And, by the way, that's a point in economy in home lighting. You get more light at less cost from a 100-watt bulb, say, than you do from four 25-watt bulbs.

KADDERLY:

You mean one large bulb costs less than four small ones.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. But the saving is not just in the initial cost of the bulbs. You get more actual light in terms of foot candles from one large high-watt bulb than you do from several of low-wattage.

KADDERLY:

Well now. That's coming close to home. The Kadderly family is going to profit by that piece of knowledge.

But, Ruth, I'm still looking at this picture of the family around the table under the evening lamp. And there's just one thing that doesn't quite click with your theme of good lighting for study and home work.

VAN DEMAN:

What's that?

KADDERLY:

Two of these children, the boy and the girl --- fifth and sixth graders I'd judge --- are not bending their heads over school books. This is a checker-board they're leaning over, --- playing checkers. Is there anything in your experience with home work that would explain that?

VAN DEMAN:

Certainly. The picture was taken on Friday night, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

I'll give you an A-plus for that, Ruth.

And, Farm and Home friends, we'll give, that is we'll send free, to any of you who are interested, this new bulletin on "Electric Light for the Farmstead."

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